

MARVEL

002

**PARENTAL
ADVISORY!
NOT FOR KIDS!**

GEORGE A. ROMERO

EMPIRE OF THE DEAD™

ILLUSTRATED BY
ALEX MALEEV



Welcome to

New York

THE EMPIRE ~~STATE~~

OF THE
DEAD



PAUL
BARNUM



MAYOR
CHANDRAKE



PENNY
JONES



XAVIER



BILL
CHANDRAKE

FIVE YEARS AFTER THE DEAD FIRST WALKED, NEW YORK CITY HAS BECOME A FORTRESS OF ISOLATION AGAINST THE UNDEAD PLAGUE. THE MILITARISTIC FORCES OF MAYOR CHANDRAKE KEEP THE STREETS RELATIVELY SAFE AND THE SURVIVORS ENJOY GLADIATORIAL GAMES IN WHICH CAPTURED ZOMBIES FIGHT FOR FOOD. PENNY JONES, A MEDICAL SCIENTIST, TEAMS UP WITH A SKEPTICAL ZOMBIE WRANGLER NAMED PAUL BARNUM TO FIND A WAY TO TAME THE UNDEAD. BUT ZOMBIES AREN'T THE ONLY MONSTROUS THREAT TO NYC. XAVIER, A ZOMBIE WHO RETAINS A MODICUM OF INTELLIGENCE, SPIES THE MAYOR'S NEPHEW BILL IN THE SUBWAY DRAINING THE BLOOD OF A WOMAN FROM TWO HOLES IN HER NECK...

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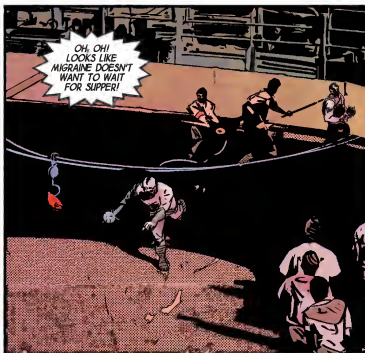
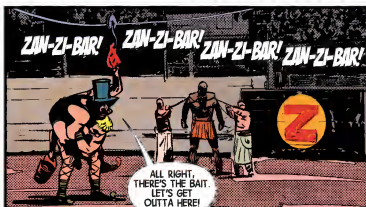
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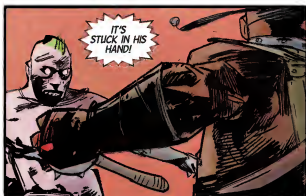
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HERE COMES
CANNONBALL!



OOOOOH!
RIGHT THROUGH
THE SHOULDER
BLADE!

BIG Z
FEELS NO
PAIN!



HE SPINS
AROUND!
HE'S GOT THE
SWORD NOW!



A
REVERSE KILL
SHOT!



TWO
DOWN! LET'S
SEE IF ZANZIBAR
CAN MAKE IT A
HAT TRICK!







XAVIER. THIS IS THE ONE I TOLD YOU ABOUT. THE ONE WHO WENT MISSING DOWNTOWN.

I TOLD YOU I SAW A SWAT OFFICER.



CAN I HAVE HER?

WE MADE A DEAL, REMEMBER?

WHAT?



YES, BUT, I CAN'T JUST... I MEAN... I'LL HAVE TO GET PERMISSION.



YOU MEAN FROM THE MAYOR? HE SEEMS TO LIKE ME. I'M SURE HE'LL APPROVE.

OH, I'M SURE HE WILL. ONLY... YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT ELSE MIGHT BE INVOLVED.



WHEN CHANDRAKE LIKES YOU, SOMETIMES THERE ARE... UNEXPECTED COMPLICATIONS.



BENEATH THE ARENA.



ANYONE WHO STEALS FROM THE CIRCUS IS STEALING FROM THE MAYOR. HE TAKES A SPECIAL INTEREST IN SUCH CASES. THIS PRISONER COMES WITH US.

ER... MAY I HAVE YOUR NAME, PLEASE?



I'M "NUMBER ONE." THAT SHOULD TELL YOU NOT TO ARGUE WITH ME.



THE DAKOTA.

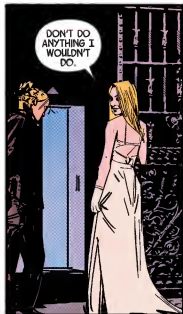
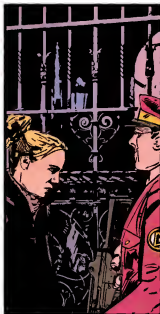


MAYOR CHANDRAKE IS EXPECTING ME, JONES. PENNY.

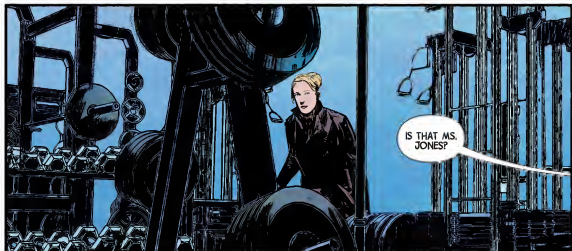


YES, ER... HE OCCUPIES THREE FLOORS. I'M NOT SURE WHERE HE--

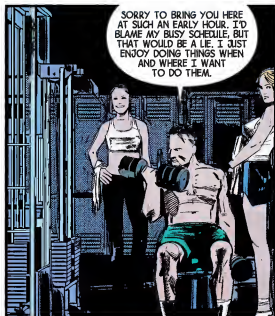
HE'S IN THE GYMNASIUM. SUB-LEVEL TWO.



DON'T DO ANYTHING I WOULDN'T DO.



IS THAT MS. JONES?



SORRY TO BRING YOU HERE AT SUCH AN EARLY HOUR. I'D BLAME MY BUSY SCHEDULE, BUT THAT WOULD BE A LIE. I JUST ENJOY DOING THINGS WHEN AND WHERE I WANT TO DO THEM.



PAUL BARNUM TELLS ME YOU'RE A DOCTOR. WOULD YOU EVER CONSIDER LEAVING YOUR PRACTICE TO BECOME ONE OF MY... **PERSONAL TRAINERS?**

I'M TEMPTED. I, ER... I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT I'M...ACTUALLY TEMPTED.



WE DON'T NEED ANOTHER... "TRAINER."



I, ER...SAID I WAS TEMPTED, BUT...I COULD NEVER LEAVE MY WORK.





GOT HIM!

GOOD. WE DON'T WANT ANY OF 'EM TO GET AWAY.

P.S. 342,
THE BRONX.



RABID. CLEAN. CLEAN. RABID.

WHAT DO THEY USE THIS STUFF FOR?



BEATS ME. ALL I KNOW IS WE GET A PENNY FOR EVERY PELT WE DRAIN. END O' THE DAY, THAT'S A COUPLE O' BEERS WE WOULDN'T GET OTHERWISE.

THE DAKOTA.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,
AS YOU ALL KNOW, WE HAVE
A SERIOUS PROBLEM, ONE
WHICH THREATENS OUR
VERY EXISTENCE.

I'M SPEAKING
ABOUT OUR ALIEN
POPULATION. I CALL THEM
"ALIENS" BECAUSE THEY ARE
NOT *US*! I WILL DO MY
BEST TO ERADICATE
THEM *ALL*!

LOWER EAST SIDE.



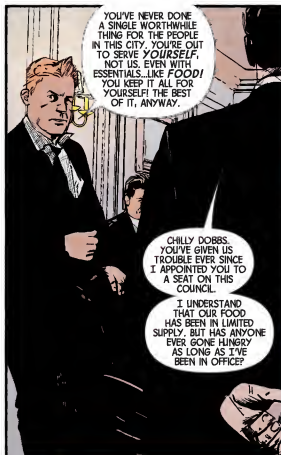
I AM
DEDICATED TO
THE SURVIVAL
OF THE SOCIETY
IT HAS TAKEN US
SO LONG TO
CONSTRUCT.

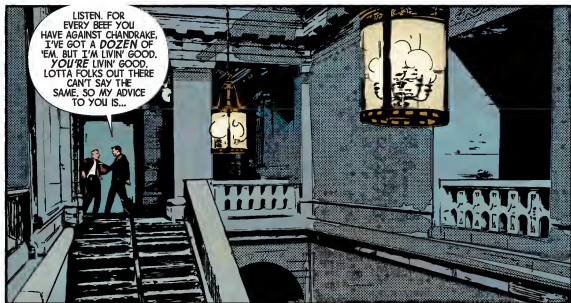
AND I
SINCERELY HOPE
THAT, WHEN THE TIME
COMES TO CAST YOUR
VOTES, YOU WILL HELP
RELECT ME AS
MAYOR OF THIS...THE
GREATEST CITY IN
THE WORLD.



YK?SE BAD.GRNL
THIS...BAD,ADHUT
WE MUST GYXN
GIVE BACK...BAD
HSAWAI FOR BAD.







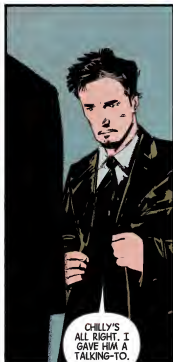
LISTEN. FOR EVERY BEEF YOU HAVE AGAINST CHANDRAKE, I'VE GOT A DOZEN OF 'EM. BUT I'M LIVIN' GOOD. YOU'RE LIVIN' GOOD. LOTTA FOLKS OUT THERE CAN'T SAY THE SAME, SO MY ADVICE TO YOU IS...



**BILL CHANDRAKE,
THE MAYOR'S NEPHEW.**



YOU BETTER GO. GET OUTA HERE. GO!



CHILLY'S ALL RIGHT. I GAVE HIM A TALKING-TO.



I DON'T THINK THERE'LL BE ANY MORE PROBLEMS.



THANK YOU.
THANK YOU. THANK YOU
FOR YOUR SUPPORT. AND
BELIEVE ME WHEN I TELL YOU...I
CLAIM **NO PRIVILEGES**. NONE
THAT I DON'T OFFER TO SHARE
WITH YOU! EVERYTHING I
HAVE, **YOU** HAVE!



IF ANYTHING
THAT DOBBS FELLA'S
SAYIN' TURNS OUT
TO BE TRUE...

NONE OF IT
IS TRUE. NOT A
DROP OF IT.



I'D LIKE A
MOMENT, SIR, TO
TALK ABOUT THE
APPROPRIATIONS YOU
PROMISED. FOR
THE ARENA.

WHERE IS
DOBBS?



I THOUGHT IT
WAS BEST TO GET
HIM OUT OF THE
ROOM. I SENT
HIM AWAY.

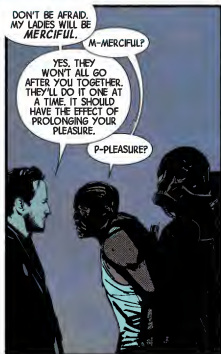
AWAY?!
YOU OF ALL PEOPLE
SHOULD UNDERSTAND THE
DELICACY OF MY POSITION
IN THIS CITY. IN THIS OFFICE.
I CAN'T HAVE PEOPLE
LIKE DOBBS THREATENING
ME. HE SHOULD HAVE
BEEN **DETAINED**.



I'M SORRY,
SIR, IF I LET
YOU DOWN.

DON'T LET
IT HAPPEN AGAIN.
I **OWE** YOU.
PAUL, I OWE YOU
A GREAT DEAL
BUT THERE ARE
LIMITS.

I UNDERSTAND,
SIR, I CAN
PROMISE YOU THAT...
I UNDERSTAND
COMPLETELY.







DARLING.



MY NEPHEW IS
A FOOLISH MAN.
I DON'T KNOW HOW
MUCH HE TOLD
YOU.

WE ARE
DEAD, YOU SEE. HE
AND I. AND THE REST OF
OUR CLAN. *LIVING DEAD.*
BUT WE ARE NOT AT ALL
LIKE THE FLESH-EATERS
OUT THERE ON
THE STREETS.



A FLESH-
EATER'S BITE
BRINGS *DEATH*. A
BITE FROM ONE
OF OUR KIND...



...CAN
BRING *ETERNAL*
LIFE.





THIS...THIS IS...
REALLY *SOMETHIN'*!
YOU DON'T GET
THIS EVERY DAY.



IF YOU WANT
IT...YOU CAN HAVE IT.
ANY TIME, THERE ARE
HUNDREDS OF US OUT HERE.
HUNDREDS, WHO CAN GIVE
YOU...*FEELINGS*...THAT
YOU'VE NEVER FELT
BEFORE.



MMMM,
YEEEEAH...
YEEAH...



NO! NO!

AAAAUGH!

TO BE CONTINUED...

UN DEAD LETTERS

I FIRST SAW **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD** SHAMEFULLY LATE FOR A HORROR GEEK. I'D BEEN AFRAID OF IT, YOU SEE. IT'S GOT A *REPUTATION*. ONE OF THE SCARIEST MOVIES EVER MADE! STRANGE AND VISCERAL! A HIGH WATERMARK FOR HORROR! FINALLY, I DECIDED TO BUCKLE DOWN AND TAKE THE PLUNGE. WHEN THE MOVIE FINISHED I SAT ALONE THINKING, "THAT'S WHAT EVERYONE GOES CRAZY OVER?" IT WASN'T AS GORY AS **EVIL DEAD 2**, AS UNRELENTINGLY TENSE AS **THE SHINING**, AS ETHEREALLY HAUNTING AS **THE INNOCENTS**... I SHRUGGED AND FIGURED MAYBE I JUST DIDN'T GET IT.

I DIDN'T. BUT THEN I DID. BECAUSE **NOTLD** WORKS, OR AT LEAST WORKED ON ME, MUCH LIKE THE UNDEAD IN THE FILM ITSELF. IT COMES ON SHAMBLY AND ODD, BUT SEEMINGLY BENIGN. IT BEGINS IN A PURPOSEFULLY HAMMY PASTICHE OF '50S SCI-FI HORROR, WITH OUR VERY RETRO JOHNNY AND BARBARA. THE FIRST ATTACK SEEMS TO SUCCEED ONLY BY SURPRISE AND BARBARA'S PROPENSITY FOR HYSTERICS. IT'S EASY TO THINK "WELL, COME ON, I COULD SURVIVE THAT."

THEN, SLOWLY BUT SURELY, IT OVERWHELMS YOU. THE FARMHOUSE. THE REFUGEES. BEN AND HIS IDEALS OF DOOMED PRACTICALITY AND ALTRUISM. THAT SHAMBLY NATURE OF EARLIER SCENES TURNS SINISTER AND HORRIFYING. WHEN BEN THROWS THAT FLAMING CHAIR OUT ONTO THE PORCH, IT LOOKS LIKE THAT WHOLE DAMN PLACE MIGHT CATCH ON FIRE. AND THE NUMBERS OF THE UNDEAD JUST KEEP GROWING...

AND THEN, FINALLY, IT SINKS ITS TEETH INTO YOU, AND YOU'RE DONE. FOR DAYS AFTER I COULDN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT IT. BARBARA, WHO SHOULD BE OUR STRONG FEMALE PROTAGONIST, SUCCUMBS TO NUMBING SHOCK, ONLY TO GET PULLED INTO THE UNDEAD MASSES BY HER OWN BROTHER *JUST* WHEN SHE SPRINGS INTO ACTION. THAT'S NOT SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN! THEN THERE'S HARRY, SELFISH AND SCARED, BUT WHO WOULDN'T BE? AND DIDN'T THE BASEMENT END UP

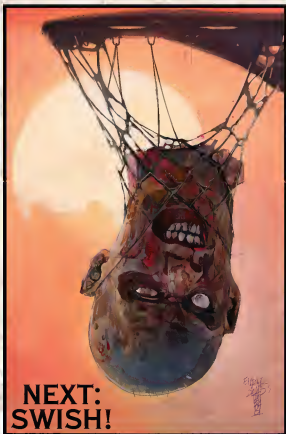
BEING THE SAFEST PLACE AFTER ALL? AND HIS WIFE, WITH THE DAUGHTER? OOF. AND BEN. POOR, POOR BEN.

SO I WATCHED THE MOVIE AGAIN. AND THEN AGAIN. AND THEN AGAIN. AND I WATCHED **DAWN AND DAY**. I SAW **LAND, DIARY, SURVIVAL**. I BECAME A FULL-FLEDGED UNDEADHEAD. WHEN I INHERITED A DIGITAL PROJECTOR FROM A FRIEND OF MINE, **NOTLD** WAS THE FIRST MOVIE I PUT IN.

AND NOW HE'S BACK. TO SEE A NEW ROMERO STORY TAKING FORM IS THE THRILL OF A LIFETIME. AND TO BRING IN VAMPIRES? I KNOW ROMERO'S THE GODFATHER OF ZOMBIES, BUT HAVE YOU SEEN **MARTIN**? IF NOT, CORRECT THAT. IT'S ONE OF MY ALL-TIME FAVORITE VAMPIRE MOVIES (AND INCLUDES A CAMEO BY ROMERO HIMSELF! AS A PRIEST!). AND IN ROMERO'S TRUE ICONOCLAST STYLE, AT A TIME WHEN TV AND FILM ARE INUNDATED WITH HORRIFIC ZOMBIES AND ROMANTIC VAMPIRES, THIS BOOK DELIVERS SYMPATHETIC UNDEAD AND VAMPIRES UNAPOLOGETICALLY HUNGRY FOR BLOOD. BECAUSE ROMERO'S GOING TO TELL *HIS* STORY *HIS* WAY, AND IF YOU'RE A FAN LIKE I AM, THAT IS HOWLING, SCREAMING, HORRIFYING MUSIC TO YOUR EARS.

GET EXCITED. STAY WEIRD. AIM FOR THE HEAD OR THE HEART, DEPENDING ON THE TEETH.

-JAKE T.





WALKER

